

## **Families, Past and Present by HarryTrumanWilson**

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**Summary:**

Jonathan, Nancy and Steve discover they all have family members in their background to be proud of, and maybe these three are more like their heroes than they know. (Stoncy Week Day 4: Family is What You Make it)

## Families, Past and Present

### Author's Note:

Day 4 of Stoncy, I thought I'd make my favorite Stranger Things characters related to important people in Hawkins (Sort've). Each one tells a story about somebody special in their family history, some who is a lot like them. Anyway, this is like pure fluff and side-stories and it's a little long, but I hope you enjoy.

“Family is what you make it...” Jonathan read. He looked back at the remains of the fortune cookie then at the others around him. They were packed around his family's dinning room table, and had just finished a really hearty mix of Chinese foods. His brother was to his left, and Will gently reached out and took Jonathan’s hand.

“And you make it awesome...” Jonathan smiled at him, then turned to his right, where Nancy quickly broke her cookie and looked at it.

“Enjoy pleasures, life is short,” She read, then raised an eyebrow, “That’s not the most philosophical fortune I’ve ever gotten...”

“Hmph...” Mike said, looking at it, “Yeah...but you should listen to it...” Nancy glared at him as Mike opened his fortune and held it up to the light, “Do not hesitate to make new friends...”

“Should’ve had that when he met Max...” Lucas said, then look at Dustin, who raised his fortune and cleared his throat loudly.

“The next person you talk to will give you good advice,”

“Floss and mouthwash, everyday...” Max said, giving the boy a shove, then looked at her fortune, “Trust those close to you, and never forget where you came from’...boring...” Max tossed the small paper, which Lucas glanced at and sighed.

“Better than mine. ‘17 is your lucky number?”

“Wow...that really sucks...” Steve said, then opened his fortune,

“Love is only a stone’s throw away...”

“A stone’s throw...it ain’t that far...” Lucas said, bouncing his eyebrows. Jonathan blushed slightly, but Steve gave him a sour look. This group here, Max, Mike, Will, Dustin and Lucas, were the only ones who knew about them. About their...three-way or ‘Polyamory’ as Nancy had called it. Eleven knew about them too, of course, but she was with Hopper getting some health test down at Indianapolis. And that left the boys and Max with them.

“Lucas...hush...” Steve muttered.

“Awh, but we like talking about it...” Dustin said, “Like, I want to know which one is usually the one who Nancy...”

“Stop!” Mike yelled, standing up, “I don’t want to hear anything about what my sister is doing with two guys...”

“I’d probably rather not talk about what Jonathan is doing either...” Will said, frowning.

“Great, because we’re not talking about it!” Nancy spat, holding up a threatening finger at Dustin. The boy sighed and shrugged.

“You guys are no fun...” he muttered.

“Hey, Will hasn’t read his fortune yet...” Lucas said.

“Well?” Dustin asked.

“It says...” Will started and, then smiled, “Last one to the Atari is a rotten egg!” he dropped the paper and took off running. Lucas, dramatically, burst from his seat and chased after Mike, who had turned smoothly and rushed to the main room. Max and Dustin were slower, pulling themselves up and trying not to be last. Jonathan, with Steve and Nancy watched them go, then Jonathan leaned back in his chair and sighed.

“I can’t believe we’re getting twenty bucks each for watching them...”

“Well, I can...since most of the money is from my mother...” Nancy

grumbled.

“Now Nancy...” Steve started, holding up a finger, “Don’t be grumpy. Just enjoy it...free dinner, some easy money...and...” Steve leaned in to the two, and bounced his eyebrows, “Plenty of time for us to spend together...”

“With our brothers around...Well, their going to be playing that Atari for a while. So what should we do you want to do?” Nancy asked, grabbing a trashcan and pushing most the disposables into a trashcan.

“How about we just spend some time relaxing? I’m going to get some drinks...” Steve offered, standing up and picking up plates and utensils, “Jonathan, go grab those Michael Jackson records there...” Jonathan eyed him in confusion as he left, then looked back to their main bookshelf, arduously repaired after the various Mind-Flayer incidents. There, at the bottom of a pile of books and photo albums was small stack of 45 rpm records.

“Michael Jackson records? Where did these come from?”

“I dunno, your mom probably bought them for us...” Steve said, leaving the room, “By the way, top shelf in the back, that’s where the liquor is, right?”

“Right...” Jonathan said, absentmindedly running his fingers over the records. Steve was right, there were four different 45s: Michael Jackson’s *Off the Wall* and *Thriller* on top, and the wider Jackson’s *Victory* and *Truimph* underneath. He very carefully picked up his mother’s two old photo albums and placed it on the table, then pulled out the other books, exposing those records.

“Are they old?”

“Well...they look dusty...” Jonathan said, leaning down and picking up *Thriller*, “But they can’t be that old. This album came out only two years ago. And *Victory* there came out last year. But why—and how—did my mom get this?” Jonathan asked as he pulled out the record and looked over the older technology.

“Maybe it wasn’t hers?” Nancy surmised

“It wasn’t me. And I don’t think Will would buy this on his own...” Jonathan said, then looked at the record and his jaw dropped. He saw a long and fancy signature on the label. A signature that had to be Michael Jackson’s. But how...who was well off enough in all of Hawkins to know Michael Jackson except...

“Bob...Mom got these from Bob. That’s the only explanation...” Jonathan said, sighing, “Wow... Bob...must’ve had some real deep connections...”

“I guess so...” Nancy had sat down next to Jonathan and was holding up one record with a set of Jacksons signatures on it, “This one says: *To Bob, stay groovy...*”

“Well...Bob was well off as a kid. And Gary’s only about an hour drive away...you think maybe he went over there and knew the Jacksons when he was young?”

“Maybe. That would be awesome...” Nancy smiled, then picked up *Thriller* and glanced at the record player, “You think a signed copy plays any differently?”

“Well...I guess really there’s only one way to find out...” Jonathan said. Nancy nodded, then put the record in, set the needle and Michael Jackson cried out, starting the album. It wasn’t that Jonathan didn’t like some of the songs, and he wasn’t against the man’s style. But he felt like Jackson was too popular to be cool. And, Jonathan also felt like when he was listening to MJ’s cries of frustration, he was left out; the African-American struggle his and he didn’t want to be called out by the man. In his mind, it was almost like it wasn’t his problem. And yet, it was his problem, since he was a white boy in America. More than anything though, he didn’t want to think about any of that while he was listening to music.

“Jonathan, does...it still matter to you?” Nancy asked, watching the record turn slowly as Michael Jackson was discussing starting something.

“What do you mean?”

“Bob...he was killed, saving your mom, Mike and Will. And I feel like shit when I look at Mike and thank God he’s safe. But Bob...wanted to be like a father to you. Is he...does it...do you feel...different?”

“Well, he wasn’t my father, nor a father to me. But he...he was really nice, and he...loved my mom,” Jonathan muttered, “I...don’t know what he was...”

“Family is what you make it...remember...” Nancy glanced at the signatures on the album cover, then back at Jonathan again, “But then again, maybe only your mom knew the real Bob...”

“Damn guys...why are we talking about someone who was killed...come on, let’s live some!” Steve said, coming into the room with three glasses full of dark brown liquid Jonathan suspected was very alcoholic, “Come here Jonathan, let’s dance!” Steve took a long swig, then grabbed Jonathan’s arm and pulled him to his feet. Then, he put his arms around the boy and started shaking his shoulders and chest toward him. Jonathan tried to keep up with him, but Steve was already feeling the beat, and was really dancing by the time Nancy turned down the music.

“Hey! Nance!”

“Hold on Steve!” Nancy ordered, then waved the two boys over. They obliged, though Steve grudgingly, and both leaned in to look at what Nancy was holding up.

“Wow...that photo is terrible...” Steve said. Nancy raised an incredulous eyebrow at him, then looked back at the picture.

“It’s an engraving, Steve...”

“A what?”

“It was a way for people to copy a painting. Before photographs were invented. There were people around back then...”

“I knew that!” Steve muttered, then looked at it harder, “But...why is it of Jonathan?” Jonathan looked at it again, then recognized it. It was his family’s, but it wasn’t him. It was...

“Steve, look at it!” Nancy grunted, cutting Jonathan’s thought off, “It looks like him, but it’s not him. There are differences, the boy in this engraving has his hair partially in a ponytail, and he is plumper, on his cheeks and neck, look...”

“All I see is Jonathan. Same eyes, same nose, even that pained way he holds his mouth when he’s thinking...” Jonathan looked at Steve, then sighed and gently took the engraving from Nancy.

“Well, he is my ancestor. On my Mom’s side...Way back though, like, early 1800s...” Jonathan started, then Steve snatched the picture from Jonathan and stared at it a moment before turning back to him in shock.

“Wait a minute! Is this...is he?” Steve started, struggling to get words out. Nancy stood up and put a hand on his arm.

“Steve! Calm down! Why are you...”

“Nancy, this is Lorraine Hawkins. As in, the founder of Hawkins... And apparently, that’s Byers’ ancestor,” Now it was Nancy’s turn.

“Wait, what? Your ancestor...is the founder of the town?”

“Yeah...” Jonathan said, trying not to let it become a bigger deal with his two lovers. There was a reason he and Will didn’t tell this to anyone.

“Jonathan, that’s awesome!”

“Yeah man! Your family founded this place...hell, your ancestor’s name is on all the signs.”

“Well, for all that, you’d think we’d be doing a little better,” Jonathan said smiling, “But it doesn’t always work like that...”

“Jonathan...tell the story...” Nancy said, settling in and sipping her drink, “I want to know how your family founded Hawkins...” Jonathan rolled his eyes, then turned to Steve, who smiled at him.

“Hey, don’t look at me. I can only tell you what my Dad said about some families being ancient. ‘Like those damn Byers...’” Steve said,

mocking his own father's deep voice, "One of them named this damn town..." Jonathan sighed, then leaned forward and began to tell the story.

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"Lorraine Hawkins doesn't have that interesting of a background, and before he came to Indiana, there isn't that much to say. He was probably rich, likely one of many children born on a huge tobacco plantation in Kentucky, and started off his life as a merchant on the Ohio River. He was known for being smart, but one thing the stories always included was that his father thought he was lazy and wouldn't amount to much. However, he was apparently a pretty good trader, as he eventually got himself and some of his family members a job with on a barge, going up and down the Mississippi. And there, he started trading more than just foods, metals and tools."

"As far as we know, he sold slaves for three years, at least, then something happened. We have a newspaper clipping from the time that says that the barge he was on sunk and there were only a few survivors. But family lore says he witnessed his brothers taking turns raping a slave. Whatever it was, after the incident, he returned to Kentucky, where he immediately spoke out as an ardent abolitionist. This didn't sit well with his family, who ran him out of the town, the county and eventually the state. He came to Vincennes, Indiana, where he had distant relatives, but even in the supposedly 'free' Midwest, slavery was 'allowed' there as a holdover from French times."

"In Vincennes, Lorraine became disenchanted and melancholic, and was supposedly wandering the streets when he heard a Quaker woman preaching, proselytizing, and promising retribution on those who continued to use and trade slaves. No one in our family knows that woman's last name, but Lorraine eventually proposed and married her. Thus, we know her as Joyce Hawkins..."

"Joyce? As in..."

"Yeah, my mom. It's a family name. Had Will or I been a girl, one of us would have almost certainly been a Joyce too...anyway, Joyce and Lorraine tried to at least end the slavery and trading in Vincennes,

but soon enough their families and the people of the city got tired of them, same as in Kentucky. They were chased out of town, but Joyce and Lorraine had gathered a small following by then. Taking as many of the abolitionists as they could, they went up north in Indiana, and found the abandoned remains of a Huron village. Lorraine laid down the first blocks of the main Quaker church, and upon it, declared they were going to have a town without slavery, without wrongs, and where women like Joyce could have a voice.”

“Quaker Haven...that little stone thing downtown...right?”

“Yeah...Once the area was settled, they first called the town “Liberty” but that didn’t stick, nor did Freetown or Emancipation. But, once Lorraine and Joyce had died and were buried under their church with an enormous tombstone with *Hawkins* written on it, that was adopted at the common name...”

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Nancy watched Jonathan in disbelief, clicking her tongue and staring at him in amazement. He was sitting on his floor, sprawled out with his arms propping him up. Steve, meanwhile had laid out next to Nancy, leaning on a pillow and letting her play with his hair. She glanced down at the almost purring Steve, then back Jonathan. Michael Jackson was now singing a dance song with a horror theme and through breaks in the background screams, she could hear Mike and Lucas arguing about how some game had gone.

“That’s amazing...”

“It’s not all that...” Jonathan muttered, looking away.

“No, Byers, that was really cool...” Steve said, sitting up, “If I had a family story like that, everybody would know...”

“Well...when my Mom tells us that story, she always ends by pointing out that Lorraine turned his back on his father, his cousins and everyone he ever knew, so that he could reject what he knew was wrong. Instead, he made a new family and community...where love was central...”

“Family is what you make it...” Nancy said, then took a sip of her really strong drink. Steve had said it was mixed, but Nancy was pretty sure it was just Jack on the rocks.

“Heh...I bet you got a few stories too...” Steve started, then mocked his father again, “Those Wheelers have been rich as long as they’ve been around!”

“Ugh...our family stories suck...or are really bad...” Nancy groaned. She paused, then looked back to Steve, “Although, I do have one story...and it goes with Jonathan’s fortune cookie theme...”

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“Diana Roscorla, I know, what a mouthful, was a great-grandmother on my father’s side, and like many of my father’s ancestors was born into an old and powerful family that was among the earliest settlers in Indiana. As a woman of such important standing, she was expected to only do a few things. Socialize with men, get married, and have children. Her parents even tried to make it easier, finding a young man, about her age, named Dudley Hearson...”

“Hearson...like...Tommy? Tommy is a Hearson...”

“I don’t know, I haven’t asked him about this. Because even though Dudley was supposed to marry my great-grandmother, Diana had other plans. The story goes that she used her respected name to take out a loan, went to the women’s college at Marian and got her degree in only three years. But, according to family stories, she went home on bended knee, begging her family to forgive her and promising to marry Dudley. Her father agreed, let her back in, paid off her debts and started to prepare the wedding. But, a few days before the event, she disappeared again, this time with most of her dowry and got a law degree from Northwestern with that huge deposit...”

“A female lawyer? Who tricked her father into paying for her schooling? That’s pretty good...”

“Yeah, but it gets better. She worked for a few years, paid off the rest of her debts, then the year was 1920. Which meant for the first time ever, she could vote. And she did, but at several polls in Indiana,

women were turned away or refused. Diana took on their cases, and took them to the Indiana Supreme Court, where she won, of course, and made sure women...er...white women...weren't barred from voting in this state. Then, she gained enough fame arguing her cases that she was backed in a run for town councilwoman. She did so well in that job that she was able to become a congresswoman in the state government... once she had her position and her money from her law practice, she started getting calls. From her father, from her brothers and even from Dudley. Her rebellious education had made her an anathema, but once she had power, everyone wanted it and her. Everyone including the rich and well off Theodore Wheeler VI, who proposed to her shortly after one of her most famous speeches on the State House floor. She agreed, serving out her term, then retiring to Hawkins, where the Wheelers were already settled..."

"I actually met this woman once, when I was maybe 8 or 9. She was ancient by the time I talked to her, but she told me a lot of that story herself. The most amazing thing about her though, were her eyes. They were filled with a fierce determination...something unstoppable. When she thought to do something, she went and did it, and nobody could stop her. And my great-grandfather knew it. That's why she'd agreed to marry him..."

"Grandmother Diana could have made her family when she was young, and she could have lived a simple life under her father and husband's guidance, never needing to work a day in her life. But, instead, she trudged her own path and proved she was one of the smartest, strongest and boldest women in all that time. And even in the midst of rising stardom, she decided to make a family. When I asked her why she'd done that, why she had given up power to marry a Wheeler, she said it was because she wanted something pure and wonderful that she could truly love and be proud of."

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"Huh..." Steve said. He was now in Jonathan's lap, and the younger boy was the one toying with his hair. Nancy was still side sitting but now she was tapping her leg and clearly deep in thought. Steve watched her a moment more, then noticed that Michael Jackson was now wrapping up a song about an affair, an unclaimed child, and a mother's warning about love. He smiled at the beat, threw back the

rest of his drink.

“You all’s families are so interesting. And those people you talked about...they’re just like you two...” Steve looked up at Jonathan and smiled, “Smart, brave, and in the right,” Steve then turned back to Nancy and grinned, “Tough, determined and unbeatable...”

“I haven’t founded a town...” Jonathan said.

“And I haven’t got a law degree. So we’ve still got a little ways to go...” Nancy agreed, then turned to see Dustin leaning out into the room.

“Do...uh...either of you have some deodorant? Or cologne? I uh...got a little sweaty that last game...” Dustin asked, looking embarrassed.

“Do something, Jonathan! We can breath through his farting!” Lucas called from behind him.

“Use something, anything! Just hurry up!” Mike yelled. Dustin turned red, and looked down. Steve felt bad for him, but Jonathan jumped in to help.

“Go to Will and I’s bathroom and look on the top shelf of the medicine cabinet...” Jonathan said. Dustin nodded at him, still tomato red, then hurried away.

“Poor Dustin...” Nancy murmured, watching him go, “Now where were we? Oh yeah, family...” Nancy moved over to Steve and mixed her hand into his, “And it’s your turn. Surely the great Steve Harrington’s family has some dramatic story in his background...” Steve pulled Nancy’s hand to him and kissed it, then smiled at her.

“My grandparents are all immigrants, Nancy. Most came to Chicago when they were kids, but the Harrington name was just picked out of a hat on Ellis Island. My family doesn’t have a long history here in the US...”

“Wait, so, your families wealth...wasn’t inherited?”

“My dad’s dad made some of it, and my dad and my uncles took some of that money and each made their own way...” Steve listened

for a moment more to MJ, who switched to a slower, more dramatic discussion of human behavior, “Though...actually, I do have a story about family being what you make it...when my dad’s youngest brother went against everything his parents and brothers wanted...”

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“Uncle Rob, Robert Harrington, was always on the outside looking in with his family. Uncle Frank, the eldest, understood his father’s business and could count well. He was going to take over the grocery store in Chicago. My father, Harvey, was a middle child and while he was known for being rather dull, he excelled with his hands and in manual labor. He was also known for being a hard worker, and was already building the connections and reputation he was going to need to start the construction and carpentry business he owns now. But Uncle Rob...he wasn’t known for being smart, nor persistent, nor even good at anything. He dabbled in my grandfather’s work, and in my father’s and in many other things, but he hated it all. There was one thing he loved though...going down to the clubs on the south side of Chicago. There, he would hang around, without a job or responsibilities, and just drink and dance and listen to music. Not just any music, no, he wasn’t a fan of those white, respectable singers up north or on the Lakeside. No, he wanted to hear the black singers, the rock and roll, the rhythm and blues, the soul music all the songs that his white, racist Polish-German parents found horrifying.”

“You see, back then...actually, somewhat still today, Chicago was split up tightly. There was an area of the city for them, the Poles and other immigrants from the east. There was an area for Irish, an area for Germans, an area for the old wealthy people and the poor new ones. And, of course, there was an area for the blacks. They were supposed to stay separate, even if it wasn’t “legally made so.” People were supposed to live and be only with their people. But my uncle wouldn’t have it. He loved that music and he loved those singers. And one day, some time around 1960...he met Anita Ruth, a gorgeous young woman, dark tan skin, with the most perfect features you’ve ever seen, perfect eyes, perfect nose, perfect lips, perfect shape. My uncle got bent out of shape over this girl, buying her gifts, going to every show, driving her around when she needed it. Eventually, he convinced her protective older brother that he had

fallen in love with her. Next thing you know, they were going steady and had moved to Gary. My father had already moved here to Hawkins that way, Uncle Rob would be between him and his family in Chicago.”

“Well, one day, Uncle Rob popped the question, and she said yes, he and this girl were set to marry. When he tried to bring her girl home, tell his parents he was getting married...well...things got out of hand. Uncle Rob and Aunt Anita were happy. My father and Uncle Frank admitted it later, they loved each other, it was clear then. But my grandfather...he knew Uncle Rob was living with Aunt Anita and they intended to marry. And they were in Indiana, where it was illegal for a two people of different races to be together. And so, he called the police and had both of them arrested for interracial sex...”

“Uncle Rob spent two days in jail. Anita spent two weeks. And afterward, they fled north, up to Wisconsin, a state where interracial marriage was always legal, and promised never return to see any of their family again. At first, Uncle Frank and my father were like my grandfather, judgmental and stupid. They wouldn’t talk to him, wouldn’t even find out where in Wisconsin he lived. Then...one day in 1965, a the same year interracial marriage was finally legal in Indiana, my father got a letter from his brother, telling him that my Aunt Anita had given birth to my cousin, Ronny. A big, happy mixed boy, who is today the coolest person on earth, hands down. And a year later I was born. My mother, decided then that we were going to Wisconsin, to have me meet my cousin, whether my father liked it or not. And so, we went, and my father, when he saw his brother, suddenly had a breakdown and begged him, and I’m talking begged on hands and knees, to speak to him again And... Uncle Rob did. He forgave Uncle Frank too, though, it was years later. But now, each of those brother’s children, us three cousins, were really close, and we spent several summers growing up together, either in La Crosse, in Chicago. But not in Hawkins. Because Uncle Rob and Aunt Anita promised to never come back to Indiana, and they still haven’t...”

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Steve finished his story with a sigh. It wasn’t as uplifting, or as nice or cool as his lovers stories had been. He was also finishing to

Michael Jackson slow, calm *Lady of My Life* that was making the final story even more melancholy.

“That’s so awful...” Jonathan said. He was now sitting right next to Steve.

“Yeah...I’m so sorry for your cousin...and everyone...” Nancy offered. Steve sighed, then leaned back onto Jonathan and let his hand mix with Nancy’s again.

“Honestly, Ronny is cool and calm about the whole thing, like he barely cares. And Aunt Anita won’t even talk about her time in jail. Actually, it bothers me more than anyone else anymore...but I respect him...my uncle and his wife so much. He was willing to abandon his father and brothers, abandoned any money and maybe even future happiness...all for the woman he loves...”

“I guess, in some ways, that makes him like you...protective, kind, and willing to do what it takes for the people he loves...” Nancy said. Steve gave her a sheepish smile, then leaned forward to give her a gentle kiss.

“It’s what you have to do when you care for people...” Steve leaned back and let Jonathan slip an arm around his chest, “Besides...us...all of us, even those munchkins...we’re a family now...cause we all love each other, and they’re nothing any one of us can do about it...now, guys, I’ve just listened to a lot of Michael Jackson love songs and this is happening...” Steve let a hand slip back to Jonathan’s thigh, “So let’s hurry to your room before your mom gets home...”

“Steve...” Jonathan said pushing the hand back. Steve could hear this was a playful tone though, and he turned to Nancy.

“That’s one...come on Nancy...” Steve said. The girl eyed him, then sighed.

“Ugh, fine...boys!” Nancy called into the other room, “We’ve lost something in Jonathan’s room and we could be searching for a while to...uh...”

“Ewh!” Mike called back, “Just go!”

“I’ll call you when Mom gets home Jonathan...” Will added.

“Some family...” Nancy muttered. Steve shrugged and bounced his eyebrows at her.

“Eh...family is what you make it...”